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ELIZABETH JENNINGS

Man in a Park

ONE lost in thought of what his life might mean
Sat in a park and watched the children play,
Did nothing, spoke to no-one, but all day
Composed his life around the happy scene.

And when the sun went down and keepers came
To lock the gates, and all the voices were
Swept to a distance where no sounds could stir,
This man continued playing his odd game.

Thus, without protest, he went to the gate,
Heard the key turn and shut his eyes until
He felt that he had made the whole place still,
Being content simply to watch and wait.

So one can live, like patterns under glass,
And, like those patterns, not committing harm.
This man continued faithful to his calm,
Watching the children playing on the grass.

But what if someone else should also sit
Beside him on the bench and play the same
Watching and counting, self-preserving game,
Building a world with him no part of it?

If he is truthful to his vision he
Will let the dark intruder push him from
His place, and in the softly gathering gloom
Add one more note to his philosophy.

2 9

DANNIE ABSE

Surprise! Surprise!

TALK not of loneliness, but aloneness.
Every thing is alien, everyone strange.
Regard an object closely, our own foot
named, how queer it appears as its toes flex.
Peer at it with greenhorn observation;
thus magnified, what incongrous toenails!
Or the tree outside, we pass everyday—
stand below it, stare at it flagrantly
till it becomes uncomfortable, till
its slender boughs, shyly naked beneath
those veined, pellucid leaves, stir a little.
Scrutinised, it grows unrecognisable.
Again, utterly estranged, our colleague
who talks to us on weekdays—just the way
he walks, what a peculiar, indolent
manner of walking, come to think of it;
and, lastly, that woman we love fondly,
sounded and labelled, who loves us perhaps—
look how she, while reading the newspaper,
taps her own forehead, checks her cheek, cheekbone,
nose, her martial lip, over and over,
withdrawn in concentration, unaware,
yet feels her face to affirm it's still there.
How then can we whisper, at night, 'My own'?
Oh how everything and everybody
are perplexed and perplexing, deeply unknown.
What surprises is that sometimes we are
not surprised, that a door clicks, half opens,
and we guessed beforehand who would enter.
Is that why we dare to cry: 'I know Smith'?
Now who of you, suggesting I raise my head
from this page, will call my name familiarly?
You will see, as always, my eyes startled.

JOHN HEWITT

The Child, The Chair, The Leaf

I TAKE the unity my senses offer
such as of birdsong out to hearing's rim
and known beyond to light's edge, moving on
and coming over, or stars reported by
men with no names to clothe their words with style,
yet which, uncoloured, pass as true as stone
or taste and texture of the well-tried leaf.

Since touch, sight, hearing and the other two
have bettered my response to what revolved
around my centre and have trenched it far
beyond the little jet that was my life,
I take without dismay what pebbles fall
or slates flick over it, knowing they will drop
through drift of depth far deeper than the self.

My world's no sphere, for there are surfaces
which fail in rondure, places when my sense
admits a quagmire or a green-slimed trough
where I lack skill to step or strength to pluck
the sucked heels upward;
yet these are part of it, of the account
that I draw up and keep for settlement.

* * * *

This shook me once that one, a cripple child,
loved by no mother, given another's love
not warm with kind but aimed, deliberate,
which, in a space of months with some expense
of will and resolution, turned the wry bone
in life's way straighter, should, an hour unwatched,
strike a sharp death in squalid accident,

and all that social-love deliberate
run twelve ways wasted in th' indifferent dust:
For I could sieve no metaphor from this
would lift the heart against adversity.

The cripple child, not allegorical,
summons no symbol or shining archetype,
that like charged metal draws the grains of ore
to shapely pattern in its fans of force,
or even accretions palpable in bulk:
a twig snapped off by shoulder lurching past;
a straw snatched up and dropped by witless pigeon
between the pavement and the porte-cochere;
a smashed brick on deserted building site—
not even this last, for this has overtones
of Babylon and tablets—nor a leaf
launched into shadow from a sunny branch.
For take the reason in the falling leaf
and measure it against that falling child
and there's an atom split that opens more
than all the pounding physicists contrive.
Who'd love a leaf and tie its brittle stem
against the twig it grew from that it face
the driven crystal and survive till spring?
A wiser hand would lay it in a book:
it would lie sad there, wisp of sentiment,
a fragment of a life, no more a leaf.

Take any common object, say, a chair,
a chair compiled of leaping particles
(such is the schoolman's fiction of the day)
will last so long as needed being chair:
have I here answer to my falling child?
Dare name who needed and define the need
as one could list the uses of a chair?
Or were the spinning particles required
to ease some balance elsewhere out of line?

Let no one mock me for my ignorance;
I grip the data that my wits provide,
and try the answers: if they cancel out
that is the answer; and I know the sum.

DONALD THOMAS

An Early Take

ANTIQUE as figures in a Book of Hours,
Silent as captives in a world of glass,
They hover through the cast of light and shade
Whose facile lens plays back their quick charade.
In black and white the framed dead caper past,
No thin decay of bone unpicks their powers.

The man was killed to feed his image fat
Within this pictured world that ran reverse,
Where miracles alone were ever plain.
Its law proclaimed split boots and punched-in hat,
When cars were crazy as a bolting horse
And heroes, raced by thugs, outran a train.

Remote as frescoed paradise, there wound
This one-track world whose limit made them free
By dwindling time into an hourless day.
No envy wove a serpent in their blood
Nor hinted that such worlds might last to see
Mobs cheer a bannered face and old men pray.

Strange as mosaic Christs and kings, to whose
Bright stones no living man compares, faintly
Their code of mime invokes an age when none
Could know that innocence was theirs to lose;
Thin, tattered clowns, parading jerkily
Beneath their ancient, Californian sun.

JAMES SIMMONS

Ancient Mariner on Holiday

SICK of estrangement, truth called fancy dress,
He shaved his beard off and put on dark glasses,
Moved to another country, changed his name
And walked among the bridesmaids, making passes.

His body still made quite a graceful show
And girls were often glad to stop and chat,
But words seemed to demand his careful use:
Story became life story—that was that.

Of course he never got his invitation
To dance at any wedding, even to write.
Most girls he cornered, bored by protestations
So qualified, chalked up a wasted night.

He managed to make nicer girls unhappy,
Some guilty, some uncertain, some, just small:
Made little hands, applying lipstick, tremble
Before they left for church or dancing hall.

His solitude, he saw, was part of greatness;
What cut him off was all the things they'd missed.
But when he said goodnight to casual strangers
Why did his face still bend down to be kissed?

Puzzled or shocked some turned their cheeks away.
What was the kiss about? He didn't know.
Some, casual or curious, kissed him back
But any time was time for him to go.

Here was no solace and no recreation.
There was, as he'd suspected from the start,
No place within his chosen life that chose him
For trivialities so near his heart.

EDWIN BROCK

Advice to beatniks

FLEXING the muscles at the nape of the neck
may move the ache away; or the
eyes-right eyes-left exertions for astigma.
Failing this, try two edrisoles with a half-pint
of tea, or lie quietly in a darkened room
and think of green.

For the solar-plexus bulge that bothers you
do raising the legs from a prone position
and twisting the trunk alternately from side
to side.
Or else a week on Metercal will do the trick
with a tablespoon of apple vinegar each day.

This way you move towards maturity with
a patched-up body which will still obey;
constipation will not worry you, and what you
need
in grace a Continental tailor can convey.

Similarly with wisdom: many a business man
has known success on a weekly reading of the
Song of God;
and neither walking on glass nor through fire
need be
endured. Commonsense is the surest antidote
for weakness: be busy and be sure you will be
saved.

Naively as a boy you dreamed of a different kind
of flowering: of a golden growth that pleased
as it enjoyed,
but now you are a man you put such things away.
Patching-up is the burden of philosophy: the
race may go
to the slow or sure, but never to the gay.

NEIL CURRY

Maypole, Phallus and Cross

LOOKING down from the fields south of the village,
It is as though its one main street were a river
Winding through a desert of green foliage.
Small houses have grown along its banks, and their
Dry foundations feed upon its tarmac;
Above their roofs a tower and a steeple
Feed the fear of death into the people
With different versions of the same black book.

But lift your eyes from these houses to the hills,
And to the highest of them, The Beacon; a place
Of worship itself once, though now stone circles
And low burial mounds are the only trace
Of the white-robed priest, and the congregation
That gathered to pay its homage to the sun,
And to the trees on Hanger. The skeleton
Of this belief, exhumed and called religion,

Was carried by scholar, wizard and saint
Down to the village then on to the city,
Where, clothed in the fashion that chanced to be current,
Fallacious reason replaced the fantasy
Of the hills, and the sun dwindled to a flame
Balanced on a tall candle; and though maypole,
Phallus and cross recall these trees, the owl,

And the royal farthing's wren, only can name
The spirits and the gods that are dead and gone.
Below The Beacon lies its antithesis.
The tower and the steeple were made of its stone,
But as the village expanded even this
Was superseded by pebbledash and slate,
That could offer more protection than the leaves.
And as personal safety always relieves
Our minds of those worries that necessitate

The comfort of a god, only the very old,
And those whose sole friends are the Trinity
Find solace in the church, ignoring the mould
Outside, where grave-diggers preach mortality.
And if in a moment we should get up and walk
To Hanger, we would find an owl coughing up mice,
And though the cool shade may feel like paradise,
As the wren sings it is watched by a hungry hawk.

SHIRLEY TOULSON

A Prisoner

WHEN I was ten, the mad boy came to tea,
Before he came, they told how it was,
They said at fourteen he behaved like four,
Would never change. I wonder'd what I'd see,

But with my sister talked the fear away.
Older than us, but someone we could teach,
He would be glad to find our outgrown toys.
We waited for the child to come and play.

He came. I ask, could we have better met
The shock of his loose, heavy body,
The wild and stupid hands, the hanging mouth
Repeating nonsense phrases, as it ate

And ate? The toys were never looked at.
We watched our parents as they talked
To his mother in their usual tones, smiled,
Without looking, at the boy. Well that

Is how I remember it. Only his eyes
Won't be recalled. Were they vacant, watery
As dogs' are, or was some person trying
To reach our world, making dumb, human cries?

GEORGE ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

The Heath: Evening

WHITE on Blackheath, or burning bright in winter,
The cricketers, the football tigers, play—
Oh think how edifying is our progress,
Organised games where once a Turpin rode!
But now the elevens are gone. Now at decline of day

Those demigods, magnanimous July clouds,
Buttress the North: now full skies overbrim
And slant across the Heath a wave of crystal
That slurs moving and thinking to a dream:
Now slow along sunk roads the unwheeled cars swim.

To such Elysium the heroes come,
Fathers with families: first, one who strives
To launch a kite: it wags a frilly tail,
It tugs higher and higher: the children clap,
And shout with no less joy when to its doom it dives.

Another paces out a ten-yard pitch:
Then, hanging scarecrow-wise across a stump
His office-coat, sends Junior in to bat:
Smiles, hoists his trousers, takes a shambling run
And bowls his "crafty ones", to shoot (who knows?) or bump.

More come, to play or watch: dogs after balls,
Dogs leading masters who have shed their cares,
And whistling boys, and casual groups of girls.
Till now the breeze dies: faintly pricks a star:
A deeper quiet falls, and everlasting airs

To transient beings out of space and time
Who walk the Heath give their own radiant dress.
Players and strollers, musers, solitaries,
They visit all; and give new blessedness
To lovers with linked hands who, maybe, need it less.

JAMES SCHEVILL

The Deacon's Sense of Dream

I AM only a clergyman of the third order
And I know less about dreams than the
Bishop or priest—
At least they tell me so. They say
A Christian soul recoils from dark of dream;
Dream is thrashing flesh at night;
They say a churchman lives to lead
the light
From the darkness. No minor deacon
can have second sight.

I try to be obedient in all things,
But at night the darkness dares to pulse
with throbbing flesh.
I run back into the church, where out of the
Gloom the altar shines
as if light comes from shade;
Then it's easy to hear the Devil dream
his way
Into the Bible. The Good Book bends
with his Demon's play.

How can Devil's Darkness light God's Word?
Is sultry flesh a furrow for
shadow, not sun,
And touch the servant tool of dream?
Sometimes I dream of my church as a drawing knife:
The two wooden handles two death points
Held by the Bishop, who sweeps the sharpened blade
and cuts
All sinful flesh away. Why then does my naked soul
Cry out for its fleshly ruts?

U.S.A.

PHILIP HOBSBAUM

A Poem for my Daughter

I SEEM to see us going to the zoo,
You scampering, I pacing. Bears awake
Your laughter, apes your scorn, turtles your rage—
"Great floppy things," you say, "what can they do?"
You run off, and I bellow after you—
Brown legs flickering under short white frock—
Standing in impotent call while you glance back
Laughing, and run off laughing. I run, too,

And bump into a friend, grown middle aged,
Point out my curious daughter, paused to see,
Wave, make you come at last. You shyly wait
Finger in mouth, huge brown eyes wondering, I
Resting my hand on your curly dark head;
Knowing you are not, and may never be.

GEOFFREY HOLLOWAY

Humanist Question

"TRANSMUTE your grief into aesthetic gain".
One's own, perhaps. But can the phrase refine
impersonally some one else's pain?

Not simple, surely, with an epithet
to sponge away the fever-sweat,
leaving sorrow cool and happy in its debt.

Behind the art-harmony, the spectral prism
of sun-shot elegy and euphemism
moves the smashed original, the pitiless swift spasm,—

while away from rhetoric, the proud tact
of the flowered catafalque silken-tricked,
the Word must bow to its abandoned fact:

the rigid wedge of cancer jamming the breast's love,
the rifled air despairing after the shot dove,
feathers in the furtive snow, bright-tinged above.

JOHN FAIRFAX

We are three

GUESS. That trailing mark is written
Above every cot before the child is there,
Bells ring and candles light the to-bed stairs.
A storm closed in, hand in glove,
Quails under dividing hands and is conveyed
From Orion's belt and from the plow,
From the little sister at the telephone,
Caesars in cleopatra beds, spaniels
With celtic eyes, kittens with wool:
Quail wisemen, there the proverb plays.
Bright mouth on my sore shoulder: sleep.

I dream my time away, and watch
The fishes among watergrass and birds
Among a sky of trees, animals among themselves
And all that move and can be watched,
But mostly I dream. The words
Follow. A grief is there. It is
Blossoming to death. Hands, feet and head,
Deep in the grave. But the question
Repeats: we are three? we are three?
Resounding like a silence in every ear.

MARJORIE BATTCOCK

Soho Square

SUNLIGHT and distole shadows in the trees
Whose fresh-furled leaves are lacquered where the breeze
Excites them to a glass-grey sheen;
Between them and the hose's jet-like play
Are jig-saw angles coloured through the spray
Of offices like panels of a screen.

It is its foreignness that gives it flair
Such as, within this variegated square,
The French church in nasturtium coloured brick,
And, playing on the grass, a child who brings
Her southern flavour, buttoned boots, earrings,
Composure that offsets her native chic.

ALASDAIR ASTON

Obscure Poet Dies in Agony

"OH now the little men are great
The world is upside-down!"
Sang the poet dying in the street
Under the dying town.

"No pity that the city's done,
No tragic towers fall,
The father and the father's son
Are underneath it all.

Behind my back is more than time,
Than voices that have sinned . . ."
The poet knew the paradigm
But couldn't raise the wind.

"Burn, London, burn! Magnificent
Aeneas moves around . . ."
The flames leap high, the arm is bent,
The poem is unwound:

Because so little flesh and bone
Support the fevered state
The spirited escape unknown,
The little men are great.

CHRISTOPHER WALLACE-CRABBE

From the Club

HE saw the frame where history was made,
A picture still defined in black and white
Where figures in old attitudes displayed
Their sharp nostalgic scenes for his delight.

Aquinas and Giotto mouldered on;
All Caesar's battlefields lay green and calm;
But still a hint of autumn sunlight shone
Over the pinnacles of Notre Dame.

Long dreaming that America only lived
In Mathew Brady's marvellous photographs,
He read the brilliant weeklies and was grieved,
Wasting his passion on blind cenotaphs.

Stumping toward his window with a frown
He saw the evening as he loved it best:
A map of stars that quietly flagged down
The dying civilizations of the west.

Australia.

NORMAN TALBOT

The Vulture and the Missionary

IN our own steady white
Arizona salt desert we can focus
a kind of human solitarily dancing
where our flat horizon throws up its light.

He stops, darts forward in a stumbling run,
twirls and skips his dark long feet,
arms and head tilt restlessly
at the steep sun.

We are difficult to amaze,
and on this ridge we cannot hear
if he is humming or see
his unreserved face.

As he regards his feet
tiny and far off on the hot sand,
his steps, fierce and imprecise,
are temporarily neat.

The air veers
from the heat and he dances curves
eccentric on the sand, uniquely
interesting to us up here,

partly because the music will go
in him and he will obviously fall,
but mainly because we would like to know
who he supposes he is dancing to.

The Sun My Monument: Laurie Lee (Chatto & Windus, 12s. 6d.).
Thistles and Roses: Iain Crichton Smith (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 10s. 6d.).
This Tower My Prison: Robert Gittings (Heinemann, 10s. 6d.).
The Period of Mammon: Geoffrey Wagner (Scorpion Press, 12s. 6d.).
Poetry and Audience 1953/60: An Anthology (Editorial Board, The University Union, Leeds).

THE *Sun My Monument* is a re-publication of Mr. Lee's seventeen-year-old first volume. While one cannot help deploring public taste for making it necessary, it is pleasant to find champagne subsidised by cider—still more pleasant to find it keeps its bouquet. Lyric poetry survives better than any other, being a poetry of immediate sensation and image, rather than of statement and commitment, and Mr. Lee's poetry is more purely lyric than that of any other living English poet. Many of the poems, written in wartime, incorporate images of war and death, but these are used subjectively, in the dateless idiom of the senses:

> "Here like the maze of our bewilderment
> the thorn-crowned wire spreads high along the shore
> and flowers with rust, and tears our common sun."

Despite its dense evocation and glitter, Mr. Lee's poetry is kept by a curious, overwrought artifice from true excellence. Consider *The Milkmaid,* an anthologised poem of Keatsian, drugged sensuousness:

> "Look what a cloudy cream the earth gives out,
> fat juice of buttercups and meadow-rye;
> the girl dreams milk within her body's field
> and hears, far off, her muted children cry."

The conceit of "Her body's field" is rather contrived, but this is nothing to the ingeniously protracted contrivance needed to obscure from us the indecorous analogy drawn between milkmaid and cow (and do cows eat buttercups, anyway?). When analysed, most of the poems reveal a success similarly precarious. You are free to object that champagne should be drunk, not analysed.

In *Thistles and Roses* Mr. Iain Crichton Smith comes some way to confirm the predictions made for him when *New Poets 1959* was published. Here, even when the poet aspires to them, there are few

lyric graces or heady raptures. We are compensated by impressive, solid strength—a strength that can afford compassion, as in this conclusion to a portrait of a First World War bore :

> "Yet all that suffering is what makes him speak.
> The least you can do is listen as he goes
> With shaking rifle into that giant dark
> Where German fathers drove him to his knees."

The title indicates the two traditions—English and Scottish—within which Mr. Smith works. His power with language is terse, often grim, whether his themes are regional or general. There are faults : a slightly defective ear leads him to jar his pentameters with nine-syllable lines; he can use such tactless inversions as "Not riches do I wish me"; but the flaws are fully expiated in the successes, notably in *Love Songs of a Puritan.*

This Tower My Prison is, like all Mr. Gittings.s work, extremely competent. The title poem is a dramatic duologue between Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, and Frances Howard, a notable beauty and murderess for love's sake. By a skilful use of the historic present it contracts into half an hour the tragedy of half a lifetime. A neutral vocabulary is accommodated without embarrassment by a flexible verse-structure. However, like a majority of the shorter poems which follow, it too often lacks verbal intensity, convincing more by good craftsmanship than imaginative impact. If we feel frustrated at some hoary sentiments in poems like *Christmas Now,* or at such moribund images as "fame's elected porch", it is because Mr. Gittings can provide us with this sort of touchstone :

> "Two hawks, glaring and orange-grey,
> Scuffled the gravel where they lay,
> One prone, the other struggling up
> To stab his hate home, neck and crop."

Mr. Wagner's prose has been highly praised, but his poetry is unlikely to enhance his reputation. No doubt, the sacred poems in *Poems Sacred and Profane* are sincere and by intention Metaphysical : they are preoccupied with death and proliferate graveyard imagery. We might justly claim to share with the Jacobeans a world of subjective terrors and uncertainty : what Dr. Wagner fails to realise is that it is no longer possible to share their emblems, their personifications (by courtesy of capital letters), their stressed past participles and archaic spelling. The profane poems are less

vitiated by pastiche, but tend uncomfortably to echo (mimic?) Eliot, Yeats, Auden, and settle for banalities like: "The ski divides the water *like a dream*. . . . As the boat burns *like a jewel* through the lake."

Poetry and Audience 1953/60, a selection from the Leeds University weekly poetry sheets, cyclostyled at a penny each, contains contributions from students, academics and established poets. It is informatively introduced by Professor Bonamy Dobrée. In principle, one would like to recommend the lesser-known poets, but, apart from poems by David Marno and Geoffrey Matthews, the better poems are inescapably by Blackburn, Heath-Stubbs, Larkin and Thwaite. There is a diversity of talent writing—and the customary shortage of poetry that genuinely has something to say.

RAYMOND WILSON

Best Poems of 1959 (Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards for 1960). Pacific Books, $3.50.

BORESTONE Mountain appear to be rapidly catching up on the hiatus caused by the unfortunate death of its founder, Dr. R. T. Moore. The latest volume, twelfth in the series, contains what the Editorial Board considers to be the best poetry published in magazines of the English-speaking world during 1959, and the prizes have been awarded as follows: first, to Richard Wilbur for *Advice to a Prophet* from *The New Yorker;* second, to John Wain for *Time Was* from *The Listener;* and third, to David Wagoner for *Elegy for Simon Corl, Botanist* from *Saturday Review.* An anthology covering such a wide field, and compiled by a board of six editors under the control of a Managing Editor, must present extraordinary problems. This year we are given some indication as to how this formidable task is performed. Apparently, each editor is responsible for a group of magazines (possibly arranged on a geographical basis) and selection of poems for consideration by the Board as a whole is a continuous process throughout the year. At the end of the selection period, cyclostyled or photographed copies of the recommended poems (without the names of authors or magazines) are sent to each editor so that the final judgment is based on quality alone.

Amongst the British poets represented here are D. J. Enright, Philip Gardner, John Heath-Stubbs, Phoebe Hesketh, Ted Hughes, Elizabeth Jennings, Roy McFadden, John Press, Betty Parvin, Rosemary Tonks and Tom Wright (four of these from *Outposts*).

The Isles of Greece by W. G. Van Keuren, *The Quarrel* by D. J. Hughes, *The Unconceived* by Margaret Albanese, *The Journey* by A. M. Sullivan, *Guy Fawkes Night* by John Press, and *"Yes and No Stories"* by Elizabeth Barker stand out in a collection remarkable for its exceptionally high standard, and a collection which speaks well for the poetry of 1959.

MARTIN RAINFORD

Universities' Poetry 3 (University College of North Staffs, 2s.).
But to the Season: Janet Burroway (Universities' Poetry, 2s. 6d.).
The Three-Sighted: H. M. Wilson (Linden Press, 8s. 6d.).
Weep Before God: John Wain (Macmillan, 12s. 6d.).
Song for a Birth or a Death: Elizabeth Jennings (Deutsche, 10s. 6d.).

THE third collection of *Universities' Poetry* contains only eight poems from the "provincial universities" (including those by W. Price Turner and Jon Silkin, who have both published volumes of their own) to twenty-one poems from Oxford and Cambridge. We are told that the "predominance of the two ancient universities" is due to the fact that quality has been the sole criterion of selection, and that no other work was considered worth inclusion. This may well be the case, but there is such uniformity of tone about these poems that one cannot dismiss the thought that editorial taste may have been somewhat restricted, or that the poems chosen may not have been the best—even from the ancient universities. Admittedly, the most outstanding poems come from Cambridge—*The Scientist* by Janet Burroway and *A Breviary of Love* by William Dunlop—but they must have compelled acceptance. What were the editors looking for? Form, rhythm, literary inspiration, acceptable tone? All these are to be found, rightly enough, but if one is to judge by this collection, how unadventurously dull these young poets are, and how lacking in any sense of urgency. The provincials—to use the editorial term—such as Meic Stephens in *The Collier,* Peter Griffiths in *Barracks,* and T. J. Brindley in *Four Minutes War,* do at least attempt to say something. Perhaps the editors of No. 4 will take more of a chance.

In order to give young poets the opportunity of reaching a wider public than university circles normally permit, the Managing Committee of *Universities' Poetry* have arranged to publish a series of poetry booklets by young poets who are either at a university or have recently come down. The first of these, *But to the Season* by Janet Burroway, is a surprisingly well-made collection. *The Scientist* is the most interesting of these poems, though it is hardly typical of her work as a whole, which gains its effect largely by its sound-values. As might be expected, there are a number of slight pieces included, but Miss Burroway already knows how to handle her material and has an admirable command of language. We shall, no doubt, see a great deal more of her work in the future.

Mr. H. M. Wilson's *The Three-Sighted* is a strange mixture. Along with poems that are well worth reading are lines and whole poems so naive as to be embarrassing to read, and other poems on conventional subjects which add nothing to what has already been said. When Mr. Wilson forgets that he is writing poetry, however, his individual approach gives point to his writing. *Train to Town* is one of the most effective pieces. The title-poem owes something to C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* but it is none the worse for that, and does enable the poet to break free from his trappings.

"Verse is dressed up that has nowhere to go", writes John Wain in his latest book of poems, *Weep Before God*. In a way, this is an indictment of much of the work produced by the group known, a few years ago, as the Movement (with whom Mr. Wain was associated), for these poets were so preoccupied with technique and achieving the correct "neutral tone" that they excluded practically everything else. However well-dressed it may have been, their verse certainly had nowhere to go. Since then, the poets concerned have all broken away to follow their own lines of development. Mr. Wain, I am glad to say, has moved further away than most of them—right into the Maverick Camp, to to speak—and he is now trying to write poems which have real significance. For once the blurb is right in describing his work as "poetry which engages directly with life, both private and public, as it is lived in our time".

There are, for instance, three long poems on important subjects. Of these *A Boisterous Poem about Poetry* is a failure, largely because it is so loosely constructed and so threadbare in idiom. *On the Death of a Murderer* is somewhat uneven and doesn't quite come off, but it was certainly worth the effort and, in tackling such a difficult theme, Mr. Wain must have learned a great deal. *A Song About Major Eatherly* (pilot of the aircraft which carried the second bomb to Nagasaki) is a fine poem on an even more difficult subject, though it, too, has its weaknesses. The poem ends on the following note:

"O, give his pension to the storekeeper.
Tell him it is the price of all our souls.
But do not trouble to unlock the door
and bring the Major out into the sun
Leave him : it is all one : perhaps his nightmares
grow cooler in the twilight of the prison.
Leave him; if he is sleeping, come away.
But lay a folded paper by his head,
nothing official or embossed, a page
torn from your notebook, and the words in pencil.
Say nothing of love, or thanks, or penitence :
say only 'Eatherly, we have your message'."

Apart from these poems, there are a number of shorter poems on more personal themes. Some of these are mere fragments, but *Anniversary,* and *This Above All is Precious and Remarkable* are admirable. Perhaps the finest poem in the collection is *Time Was:*

"Time was I watched the minnows in the brook.
I took them for my brothers and my wives,
Till I bent closer for a second look
And saw that they were swimming for their lives.
Survival was their magic and their art :
How could I bear their coldness near my heart?"

There are clear signs of development in Miss Jennings's latest book of poems—a movement from shadows to substances; from an intellectual apprehension of landscapes, myths and bodiless passions to a curiosity about people and their attachments; from a way of looking to a way of feeling (perhaps it would be more correct to say, a way of letting her feelings break, still rather delicately, through the formal patterns of her poems). *To a Friend With a Religious Vocation, Remembering Fireworks, My Grandmother, Visit to a Friend in Hospital, A Kind of Understanding,* and *The Two Deaths,* are amongst the most interesting pieces through which Miss Jennings appears to be seeking and finding this new freedom of expression.

It may be the result of deeper religious experience. Certainly there are more explicitly religious poems, though—with the exception of *Lazarus*—these are usually too dependent on pre-digested ideas. *Lazarus,* on the other hand, is the most powerful poem in the book :

"It was the amazing white, it was the way he simply
Refused to answer our questions, it was the cold pale glance
Of death upon him, the smell of death that truly
Declared his rising to us. It was no chance
Happening, as a man may fill a silence
Between two heart-beats, seem to be dead and then
Astonish us with the closeness of his presence. . . ."

This is not to suggest that there is any loss of control, or lack of craftsmanship. Miss Jennings remains one of the most technically proficient of our younger poets—there is not one bad poem in the collection. Perhaps her work is still too carefully controlled and logically worked out, so that the logic and the neatness cancel out the feeling. Nevertheless, she appears to be emerging from her remote, self-protective shell into a world of actual experience in which fear, pain, love and hate are real, and personal relationships mean something more than intellectual themes to fit into the formal patterns of art. *Song for a Birth or a Death* is one of the best choices yet made by the Poetry Book Society.

CHRISTOPHER MORGAN

The Tallest Tower: Maurice Buesnel.
Swords of the Kingdom: Alan Robinson.
A Stone my Star: Betty Parvin.
A Pattern of Time: Alan Crang.
And the dark brought frost: Christabel Fowler.
Time-Bound is Man: A. C. Landor.
In the Web: Roy Boardman.

} Outposts Publications, 3s. each.

IT is somewhat unusual in these days for a poetry magazine to continue for more than a few years without the financial support of a society or publishing organisation. As this happens to be the fiftieth number of *Outposts,* a magazine which is entirely dependent on its circulation, I feel that the event ought not to go unnoticed and, on behalf of all its readers, I would like to congratulate the founder and editor on such a remarkable achievement.

It is a curious fact that, although this magazine has probably done more for poets and for poetry in this country than any other magazine, few of the critical surveys of the period have been gen-

erous enough to give credit where it is due; and this is not always the result of ignorance on the part of the critic. For instance, in a recent broadcast on developments in modern poetry during the last few years, Mr. Bernard Bergonzi went out of his way to mention the influence of *Poetry Quarterly, Nine* and *Poetry London,* but seemed unaware of the existence of *Outposts,* which has outlived all three (though Mr. Bergonzi has contributed to *Outposts*). Where, one might justifiably ask, are *Poetry Quarterly, Nine* and *Poetry London* today? What is even more to the point, where have they been for several years? Poetry magazines come and go with some rapidity, but since its inception in 1944, *Outposts* has quietly pursued its way, without shouting the odds, hurling abuse at its contemporaries, or lending itself to the publicity purposes of any restrictive group, and has continued to reflect the most significant trends in contemporary poetry.

As proof of this, pick up any of the annual collections devoted to the best poems of a particular year, or any good anthology of poems written in the last ten years or so, and you will invariably find work which first appeared in *Outposts* (and sometimes included without acknowledgment of the fact). Come to think of it, an excellent anthology covering the last fifteen years could be made from the pages of this magazine alone. Like other periodicals of its kind, *Outposts* has always published a certain amount of American poetry, but, to the best of my knowledge, it is the only magazine which has consistently featured the work of British Commonwealth poets. Perhaps its most noteworthy contribution, however, has been the assistance and encouragement it has given to young and unestablished poets long before they were taken up and "discovered" by other editors and critics. To call the roll would take rather a lot of time and space, but amongst those whose early work appeared in *Outposts* are Dannie Abse, Paul Dehn, Muriel Spark, John Wain, Kingsley Amis, Elizabeth Jennings, Burns Singer, Anthony Thwaite, Robin Skelton and Alan Sillitoe, to mention just a few at random. The first booklet in the *Outposts Modern Poets* series appeared in 1956 and I believe that it would be true to say that since that time *Outposts Publications* have published more collections of work by new poets than any other publisher in the British Isles.

The Tallest Tower, one of the latest booklets in the series, contains some interesting poems which might have been more successful if the author had not been in quite so much of a hurry to get his ideas down on paper, or if he had allowed himself more time

for revision. Maurice Buesnel is deeply concerned with the conditions of his own age and writes what might fairly be described as poems of protest. In *The Temple* he contrasts the cowering beggars crying for alms with the priests and the "graceful women clad in silken folds", setting the exquisite jewels beside the "sordid squalor" of India. The title poem itself is a protest against the modern Babel in which most of us are compelled to live. *Donevan's Wake,* unlike anything else in this collection, is a convincing, if macabre, presentation of an Irish wake, with the corpse "Upright, propped against the wall / Cold and pallid in the winter light; / Boxed in slightly shining wood. . . ."

Alan Robinson makes more use of rhyme and rhythmical pattern in his *Swords of the Kingdom.* That he is essentially a religious poet is made evident by such poems as *Easter, Advent, Christmas Eve, Pentecostal Music* and *Grace,* and by the Christian symbolism he adopts in other poems. *Now* and *Hope* demonstrate his facility for capturing atmospheres. Sometimes his unconventional use of words seems to throw the poem out of gear, but in the right place it can be extremely effective.

Two of the poems in *A Stone my Star* have already been selected for inclusion in recent anthologies, and it is possible that other poems from this booklet may find their way into similar compilations, but to appreciate the singularly lyrical quality of Betty Parvin's work it is necessary to see it as a whole. There is nothing pretentious about these poems and no attempt is made at intellectual hair-splitting—though *Mothering* gives occasion for fresh thought on an age-old subject. Betty Parvin writes of her own everyday experiences—seeing a magpie, returning to her native village, chance encounters, and family connections—and leaves the profundities to others. Yet she has such an individual way of looking at things and putting them into perspective that, through the re-creation of these simple experiences, we are brought into contact with the intensities, the paradox and underlying reality of life itself.

Mr. Crang's poems seem to fall into two categories: those concerned with nature and the seasonal cycle, and those of a more personal kind. In the nature poems, such as *Autumn, Childhood in November* and *Above Aberdovey,* a keen eye and a vivid sense of imagery help him to present his landscapes with conviction. In the more intimate poems, *Lament* and *Communication,* he is usually groping towards the significance of personal relationships and striving to break through to the inner self. He is a competent craftsman at all times, but perhaps his most successful poem is *On Find-*

ing a Suicide in which he uses the nature imagery of Spring to increase the tension whilst he confronts his innocent lovers with the cold fact of death—"popping up where it was not wanted—".

And the dark brought frost could be said to commemorate the death of the poet's lover, for though each piece stands as a poem in its own right, the collection as a whole makes up a sequence concerned with the different aspects of the death of this one person. In attempting to deal with such a theme there was great danger that the poet would either be so much at the mercy of her emotions as to destroy the balance of the poems or be so constrained in her efforts to be objective that the reader would remain unconvinced. Christabel Fowler moves warily between the two, using a simple language which never dissipates its strength through sentimentality and never loses human dignity. There is remarkable power in some of these poems. It has to be seen what Miss Fowler will be able to make of less urgent themes.

Mr. Landor uses poetry as a means of crystallising his impressions. *On Arriving at Ostend* and *Cumberland,* for instance, convey the movement, noise and colour of the scene and leave it at that without comment. *On Reading Lawrence* and *Nietzsche* are inspired by his literary tastes. But the poems which have most impact upon the reader are the sketches on his grandmother and an account of the adoption of a baby.

Mr. Boardman's main theme is that of the love relationship in its various moods. In a few of these poems it is true that he is also concerned with capturing the urgent life of the moment, but he always returns to explore and re-explore the nature of human love from different angles of interest (*Like the Sea, Light and Dark* and *Contact*). I'm not sure that his spider's web—with all its implications for the victim—is quite the appropriate image for the title poem, but that is a minor detail. *What Can it Mean to Me?,* with its play on words and skilful use of parallels and antithesis, is the most impressive poem in this collection.

JOHN SEYMOUR

THE DULWICH GROUP

THE DULWICH GROUP will re-commence their series of monthly poetry readings in September at the Crown and Greyhound, Dulwich Village, S.E.21. Meetings will be held on 27th September, 25th October, 29th November and 13th December.

THE GREGORY AWARD

THE GREGORY AWARD. When that distinguished patron of the arts, Mr. E. C. Gregory, died two years ago he made provision for the Gregory Fellowship at Leeds University to be placed by an annual Award available to writers under 30. Applications for the March 1962 Award are now being invited and should be received by the Trustees not later than 31st December, 1961. The conditions of the Award are set out below, but prospective candidates are reminded that applications must be supported by work of Belles Lettres, Poetry or Drama (which need not have been published). In reaching a decision the judges will consider the literary quality and promise of the work submitted, and the primary concern will be the artistic merit of the work in question.

THE HEADLANDS, poems by Howard Sergeant (published by Putnams) can be ordered through local booksellers or obtained from this address, price 8s. including postage.

E. C. GREGORY TRUST FUND

A candidate for an Award must :—

(a) be a British Subject, (b) at the time of the Award be under 30 years of age, (c) submit for the consideration of the judges (T. S. Eliot, Herbert Read, Bonamy Dobrée and Henry Moore) a published or unpublished work of belles lettres, poetry or drama.

The Award is made annually to encourage young writers. In addition to merit, candidates will be asked to show that they are likely to benefit from the opportunity offered by the Award to give more time to writing.

The Award will be made in March 1962. Manuscripts are to be sent to the Trustees, E. C. Gregory, c/o Wade & Co., Lloyds Bank Chambers, Bradford, Yorks, by 31st December, 1961, labelled on the envelope "E. C. Gregory Trust Award".

Though it is impossible to state the exact amount of the Award for any year, two Awards were made last year of a total of £700.